GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4401
ANSWERED ON:22.08.2001
CANCER FROM ASBESTOS
P.R. KHUTE

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the chances of cancer have increased on account of the use of asbestos in the capital and different parts of the country;

(b) whether there is a ban on the use of asbestos in many countries of the world;

(c) if so, whether the Government propose to take some special measures to restrict the use of asbestos in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR)

(a) Asbestos is a well-known carcinogen only when inhaled as part of the occupational exposure to people involved in manufacturing or use of Asbestos. There is no evidence to show that environmental exposure can lead to cancer. Data collected by Indian Council of Medical Research shows no change in prevalence of lung cancer in Mumbai, Bangalore, Bhopal and Barshi, while the cities of Chennai and Delhi have shown some increase in the number of cases.

(b) Some of the countries in the world like France, U.K., Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherland, Finland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Poland and Saudi Arabia have banned the use of Asbestos.

(c)to(e) Under the factories Act, the processes involving handling of Asbestos have been considered hazardous. The workers handling Asbestos are required to undergo pre-employment and periodic medical examination. The factories also maintain the health records of the workers. Section 41-B, 41-C and 41-F of the Factories (Amendment) Act 1987, deal with the hazardous processes.